



February 2014 Issue



Director's Message

Scenario-Based Learning at the VRSII

The School-to-Work Program (STW) at the VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII) is a unique and influential learning environment. A unique part of this environment is called Scenario-Based Learning (SBL).

SBL is an educational approach where interns

take an active, integrated and inquiry-based approach to learning through the use of real-world scenarios.

Through these real-world scenarios, interns can develop communication, teamwork, self-directed learning, reflective practice and ethical practice. In order to accomplish SBL, the STW faculty presents specific scenarios each week from a particular type of setting in which interpreters might work. The interns then collaborate to discuss, problem-solve and undertake the various challenges that are inherent in interpreting in each of these settings.

As part of these weekly scenarios, mock interpreting situations are established with actual participants. These mock situations, or real-world scenarios, provide interns with actual interpreting practice. Then, when the scenario are complete, the interns can discuss their cultural, ethical and linguistic choices with their mentors.

Through this reflection with their mentors (deaf and hearing), the interns are able to explore ethical foundations from a variety of perspectives and expand their world view by engaging in critical thinking. This process helps shape their professional decision making for their future work as a professional interpreter.

The use of real-world scenarios with the appropriate support is a vehicle which helps the interns to bridge theory and practical experience. After the interns practice and become more proficient in real-world scenarios, they will be more prepared to work as

professionals in the field of interpreting. SBL brands the STW Program as one of the most exciting and innovative training programs in the field today.

School-to-Work Program Deadline

Feb. 21, 2014

IEP coordinators: encourage your graduates to apply now!

Apply Now to Attend the VRSII Symposium: "Improved Practicum Design for Improved Student Outcomes"

During this symposium scheduled March 14 – 16 in Salt Lake City, participants will work to create a common understanding and approach to identifying content and sequence of measurable learning outcomes for the practicum experience. The ultimate goal will be to enhance IEP graduates' job readiness.

Presenters Sharon Neumann Solow and Dr. Marty Taylor will lead participants through discussions about creating a common, more standardized understanding of how to devise and implement meaningful practicum content and outcomes for students that will better prepare them to enter the workforce.



L to R: Sharon Neumann Solow, Dr. Marty Taylor

Symposiums offered by the VRSII are a unique opportunity to network, collaborate and create working curriculum to meet the challenges of contemporary interpreting education.

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VRSII Interpreter Educators Symposium 2013

Participants will apply concepts learned during the symposium that can immediately be implemented into their own IEP programs. To apply for the VRSII symposium, send an email to vrsii@sorenson.com.

Successful Collaboration



VRS Interpreting Institute

Empowering Interpreters and Educators®

Last year, for the first time in interpreter education history, academia – the University of North Florida (UNF), and industry – the VRS Interpreting Institute (VRSII), collaborated to build an exciting opportunity for interpreters interested in teaching ASL/English interpreting at a college level. The organizations partnered to create a program that would offer interpreters a chance to earn a master's degree in American Sign Language/English interpreting with a concentration in interpreter pedagogy through distance learning. This program was designed specifically to prepare participants to teach the interpreting process in colleges and universities. Classes were taught both online and on-campus at the UNF and the VRSII. The program's first cohort graduated December 2013.

Dr. Carolyn Ball, executive director of the VRSII, says this type of collaboration opens the door for interpreters to continue to grow through obtaining advanced degrees. "With the flexibility of a distance-learning

program, many interpreters can now consider obtaining their master's degree. Before this collaboration, it would have been impossible. We're pleased that the program has been received so well."

Program instructors included recognized educators from both the VRSII and UNF as well as internationally-recognized ASL interpreter trainers. Visit www.unf.edu/coehs/edie/vrsii/Faculty.aspx to learn more about the instructors.

The first master's program cohort was comprised of 15 students, 12 of whom graduated. With ASL/English educators in short supply, the VRSII/UNF master's degree program is meeting an urgent need. Immediately following graduation, some of the new graduates had the opportunity to interview with the CATIE Center at St. Catherine University, in Minneapolis, Minn., and were hired as new faculty.

Applications are now being accepted for the next session of the 18-month program that begins summer 2014. Visit www.unf.edu/coehs/edie/vrsii/ on UNF's website to learn more about this opportunity. To learn more about the VRSII, visit www.vrsii.com.

School-to-Work Program Interns Continue to Impress

The VRSII welcomed 12 new interns to its School-to-Work Program in January, and is proud to announce that all the interns have already passed the written portion of the Utah Interpreter Program Certification Written Exam.

The interns were chosen from IEPs across the United States. While all interns have different backgrounds, they all share a love of interpreting. In fact, some interns, like Eileen Roberson, become so enamored with interpreting, they decide to make a career change to become a professional ASL interpreter.

Roberson holds a degree in engineering, earned at the Merchant Marine Academy. As a captain in the Navy, she has sailed ships around the world as well as had a civilian career with the Department of the Navy. She is now retired from the military, but she says had she found interpreting earlier in her life, her career would have been focused there. Roberson says she joined the Navy and made it a career "because she could," but describes ASL interpreting as her passion. "I don't take it lightly that I've found my passion in life and have been able to pursue it," she says. "For many people, that never happens."

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2014 School-to-Work Class. Front row, left: Eileen Roberson

Roberson first learned about ASL interpreting in her church several years ago through a deaf ministry. Her first memory of noticing sign language was watching an interpreter at her church who, she says, was probably signing the words to a musical piece. "I thought the movements the interpreter was making were so beautiful." Roberson became involved with the deaf ministry and took two beginning sign language classes offered by her church. She enjoyed them so well she registered for additional classes at Gallaudet, which was near her home. After this, she decided to enter the only Interpreter Education Program (IEP) in the state of Maryland where she lives. After working 12- to 13-hour days, she would drive another one to two hours to get to IEP classes at Catonsville. "This was a long way from home," says Roberson, "but there was never a day when I was en route that I wished I wasn't going. I couldn't wait to get there. That's how I knew this was the career for me."

Roberson's enthusiasm for interpreting and for the School-to-Work Program is inspiring. "I feel it should be said," says Roberson, "that this program is the finest training program I've ever experienced. I have had a lot of training in my career, but nothing that compares to the STW program. The staff is genuinely here for us – you can feel it. They're here to encourage us, improve us and answer questions. They understand what we're going through."

Roberson looks forward to being NIC certified and hopes to have a career in religion-based interpreting as well as community interpreting. Her advice to students currently working through an IEP: "If you really want this, you can really have this. If you really invest in this - time, energy, practice and involvement in the deaf community – it will pay off. You get out of it what you put in. Even if you feel your skills are terrible, one day it will be as though a switch has been flipped. It will happen."

IEP graduates interested in applying for or learning more about the STW program can visit www.vrsii.com/schooltowork.